DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 423 537 CS 216 495

TITLE	English 30 Diploma Examination Results. Examiners' Report for June 1998.
INSTITUTION	Alberta Dept. of Education, Edmonton. Student Evaluation Branch.
PUB DATE	1998-06-00
NOTE	9p.; For English 33 Diploma Examination Results, see CS 216 496.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Foreign Countries; High Schools; Reader Response; *Reading Achievement; Reading Comprehension; Reading Tests; *Writing Achievement; Writing Evaluation; Writing Tests
IDENTIFIERS	*Alberta Grade Twelve Diploma Examinations; *Response to Literature

ABSTRACT

The summary information in this report provides teachers, school administrators, students, and the general public in Alberta, Canada with an overview of results from the June 1998 administration of the English 30 Diploma Examination. The information in the report is most helpful when used in conjunction with the detailed school and jurisdiction reports that are provided electronically to schools and school jurisdiction offices. The report notes that of the 12,343 students who wrote the examination, 95.1% of these students achieved the acceptable standard, and 16.0% of these students achieved the standard of excellence. The report provides statistical data and examiners' comments for the reader's response to the literature assignment and the literature composition assignment. It also presents statistical data, examiners' comments, and a discussion of examination questions on the reading portion that many students answered incorrectly. (RS)

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English 30

Diploma Examination Results
Examiners' Report for June 1998

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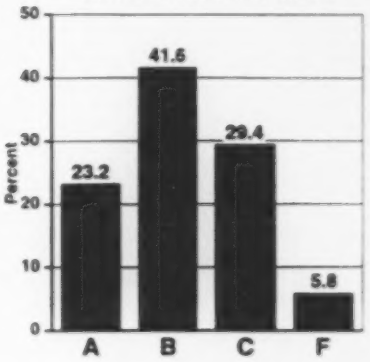
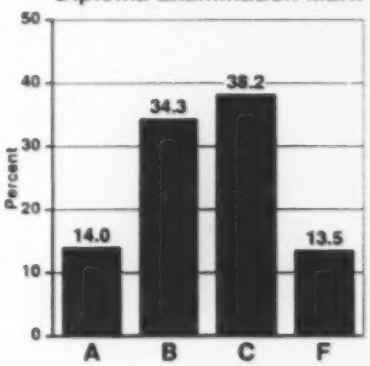
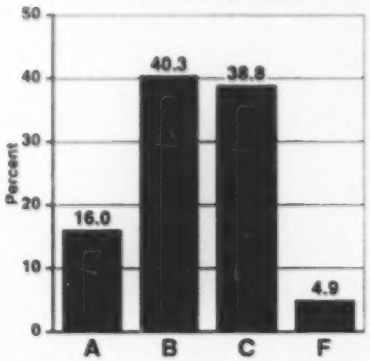
School-Awarded Mark



Diploma Examination Mark



Final Course Mark



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The summary information in this report provides teachers, school administrators, and students with an overview of results from the June 1998 administration of the English 30 Diploma Examination. This information is most helpful when used in conjunction with the detailed school and jurisdiction reports that are provided electronically to schools and school jurisdiction offices. A provincial report containing a detailed analysis of the combined January, April, June, and August results is made available annually.

Description of the Examination

The English 30 Diploma Examination consists of two parts: a written-response section and a reading section. Each part is worth 50% of the total examination mark.

Achievement of Standards

The information reported is based on the final course marks achieved by 12 343 students who wrote the June 1998 examination.

- 95.1% of these students achieved the acceptable standard (a final course mark of 50% or higher).
- 16.0% of these students achieved the standard of excellence (a final course mark of 80% or higher).

Students who achieved the standard of excellence (80% or higher, or A) on the diploma examination demonstrated impressive competence in their writing. Students who achieved the acceptable standard (50% to 64%, or C) were often able to use language well, but were not always able to sustain this ability.

Provincial Averages

- The average school-awarded mark was 68.7%.
- The average diploma examination mark was 64.2%.
- The average final course mark, representing an equal weighting of the school-awarded mark and the diploma examination mark, was 66.8%.

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Part A: Written Response

Part A: Written Response is written at a different time from *Part B: Reading*. Students are required to complete two writing assignments related to the same piece of literature. Both assignments assess a variety of reading, writing, and thinking skills.

Readers will find the results most meaningful in the context of the assignments and the scoring descriptors. The most useful starting place for reviewing these results is at the **3 Satisfactory** level. Such work exceeds the pass mark of 50%. The scoring criteria are in the *English 30 Information Bulletin, Diploma Examination Program* for the 1997–98 school year, which is available in all schools.

The table below outlines the requirements for each assignment, the categories for scoring each assignment, the amount each category contributes to the total mark (parts A and B combined), and the percentage of students achieving at the various levels. In June 1998, the average raw score for Part A was 32.3 out of 50.

By comparing school and jurisdiction results to provincial results presented here, teachers can determine areas of strength and weakness in the achievement of their students and, consequently, areas of potential strength and weakness in their programs.

Examination Blueprint and Percentage Distribution of Scores

Description of the Writing Assignment	Scoring Category	Proportion of Total Mark(%)	Percentage Distribution of Scores									
			Excellent		Proficient		Satisfactory		Limited		Poor	
			5	4.5	4	3.5	3	2.5	2	1.5	1	Ins*
Minor Assignment												
The student is required to respond personally and thoughtfully to literature, and to communicate clearly and effectively in writing.	Thought and Detail	7.5	4.2	4.6	16.4	13.5	32.0	13.9	11.4	2.3	1.3	0.3
	Writing Skills	7.5	3.8	3.9	19.2	15.2	36.8	10.7	7.5	1.4	1.0	0.3
Major Assignment												
The major assignment maintains a thematic connection to the minor assignment. The student is required to demonstrate an appreciation of literary works studied in class by discussing theme and the literary techniques that the author uses to support that theme. The student is also required to synthesize thoughts clearly and correctly in writing.	Thought and Detail	12.5	6.3	4.7	16.7	13.4	29.7	14.6	11.7	2.0	0.9	0.2
	Organization	7.5	4.9	4.5	16.3	14.7	37.2	13.1	7.9	0.8	0.4	0.2
	Matters of Choice	7.5	5.8	4.2	18.7	14.2	38.5	10.2	6.5	1.0	0.9	0.2
	Matters of Correctness	7.5	6.2	4.9	19.1	15.5	30.9	11.1	9.2	1.6	1.3	0.2

***Ins** (Insufficient) is a special category that includes students who did not attempt the assignment, who wrote too little to evaluate, or who wrote answers that were completely off-topic.

Note: The shaded portion represents the percentage of students who achieved or exceeded the acceptable standard. Of this group, students with scores of 4, 4.5, and/or 5 have achieved the standard of excellence.

Examiners' Comments

Reader's Response to Literature Assignment

This assignment is intended to focus the student as a reader on his or her own response to a text and a theme that are provided. This assignment required the students to discuss what the poem "A U Boat Morning, 1914," conveyed to them about the ways in which we are affected by turning points in our lives.

To some students, the experience described in the poem seemed clear; to others it was confusing. All students were able to recognize that those involved were changed by the experience. Some students supported their ideas with personal references. Most students described the nature of turning points; e.g. that typically, people do not expect or recognize the "point" itself until it is too late to do anything but reflect on it.

The writing of those students achieving **3 Satisfactory** sometimes seemed confused about what was literally happening in the poem. However, most students demonstrated their appreciation that a turning point like the experience described was, although shocking, a part of life that can be dealt with in a positive way. Better developed responses also noted the effect of a turning point; for example, that when the unthinkable actually happens, we are changed.

Students achieving scores of **4 Proficient** and **5 Excellent** were perceptive and focused in their personal response to the poem. Many recognized the experience presented in the poem as a metaphor for any change that affects our perception of the world. Students who achieved overall test scores at the standard of excellence usually presented carefully structured discussions that reflected their understanding of the experience presented in the poem. For example, many students effectively utilized the poet's observation that an "ancient confidence" vanishes, and "we will live in a time strange to us" after a turning point of such significance as the one described.

Literature Composition Assignment

Students were required to develop and support a thesis based on appropriate literature regarding the individual who has experienced the impact of a turning point. For this assignment students referred to a wide variety of literature including many of the new novels on the approved list. Most students understood "turning point" as an event or experience that resulted in a change in the character's perspective or values.

Generally, students had no apparent difficulty relating literature to the topic. However, students achieving **3 Satisfactory** often superficially regarded any significant plot event as an illustration of a "turning point." Many students cited examples of several turning points in their discussions, describing the effect or impact of each on the plot. Many students presented the position that turning points are inevitable and that people, like the successful protagonists in the literature discussed, must just get on with life, or, in the case of tragedy, must learn to avoid the pitfall of the fatal flaw.

Students achieving **4 Proficient** and **5 Excellent** often wrote perceptively about those factors that precipitated the turning point as well as discussing the nature and effect of the change it brought about. Writers of this standard often incorporate their personal reflections from the Reader's Response within their skillful discussions of the appropriately chosen literature. For these students, "A U Boat Morning, 1914" did serve as a helpful thematic "warm up."

Overall, the organization of ideas continues to be more effectively focused; however, control of writing skills is notably erratic. The impact of ineffective word choice, an aspect of the erratic control of writing, contributed to lower scores in some categories than would otherwise be awarded.

Question-by-Question Results

Question	Key	Difficulty*
1	D	89.4
2	B	63.7
3	B	58.7
4	A	62.1
5	D	56.9
6	C	70.4
7	B	77.7
8	B	60.2
9	C	70.7
10	C	39.5
11	B	55.2
12	A	61.6
13	C	46.6
14	C	88.5
15	B	88.6
16	A	82.4
17	B	76.7
18	C	62.7
19	B	65.1
20	D	55.4
21	D	56.1
22	A	61.9
23	B	60.8
24	D	83.7
25	A	69.9
26	B	69.9
27	D	63.0
28	C	63.4
29	D	66.9
30	A	53.1
31	B	68.9
32	C	86.4
33	C	87.8
34	B	60.6
35	A	74.4
36	B	62.3
37	A	65.7
38	C	81.2
39	A	69.4
40	C	66.5
41	A	70.3
42	B	82.2
43	A	58.7
44	D	63.4
45	B	80.7
46	B	48.0
47	B	44.8
48	A	39.9
49	D	72.7
50	D	52.0
51	A	71.0
52	D	72.8
53	D	38.1
54	D	66.1
55	A	56.6
56	C	69.4
57	D	82.3
58	B	38.6
59	C	44.1
60	D	42.0
61	D	64.5
62	A	65.3
63	C	56.4
64	D	47.4
65	C	41.9
66	C	59.2
67	C	51.8
68	A	60.6
69	C	49.2
70	D	62.8

*Difficulty—percentage of students answering the question correctly

Part B: Reading

The table at the left shows question-by-question results and the keyed answers. Parallel tables in the school and jurisdiction reports show the percentage of students who selected each alternative. By comparing school and jurisdiction results to provincial results presented here, teachers can determine areas of strength and weakness in the achievement of their students and, consequently, areas of potential strength and weakness in their programs.

Examination Blueprint

Part B: Reading has a value of 70 marks, one mark for each multiple-choice question. Each question is classified in two ways: according to the curricular content area being tested and according to the thinking (process) skill required to answer the question. The examination blueprint illustrates the distribution of questions in June 1998 according to these classifications.

	Classification by Thinking Skills			
Classification by Course Content	**Literal Understanding**	**Inference and Application**	**Evaluation**	**Total**
Meanings	17, 28, 38, 47, 62, 63	1, 3, 7, 8, 21, 24, 30, 32, 34, 44, 45, 49, 50, 52, 54, 55, 58, 68, 69	2, 13, 46, 48, 53, 67, 70	32 Items (23%)
Critical Response		4, 6, 10, 11, 23, 29, 33, 39, 41, 43, 51, 56, 59, 61, 64, 65, 66	5, 18, 19, 27, 31, 60	23 Items (17%)
Human Experience and Values		12, 16, 20, 22, 25, 35, 36, 40, 42	9, 14, 15, 26, 37, 57	15 Items (10%)
Total	6 Items (4%)	45 Items (32%)	19 Items (14%)	70 Items (50%)

*Subtest Results***

Results are in average raw scores.

Total Part B: 44.6 out of 70

Course Content

- Meanings: 19.8 out of 32
- Critical Response: 14.0 out of 23
- Human Experience and Values: 10.8 out of 15

** Readers are cautioned **not** to compare subtest results because the subtests are not of equal difficulty. Instead, readers should compare these provincial subtest results with their own school subtest results.

Examiners' Comments

The results of Part B: Reading indicate that English 30 students are proficient in close reading. Most students are able to successfully infer meaning even from texts that teachers say are complex and subtle.

The second reading selection, an excerpt from the novel *A River Runs Through It*, provided an opportunity for many students to demonstrate their skill. In this passage, the narrator characterizes his father and portrays his father's beliefs through the narrator's account of the beauty and significance of fly fishing in his formative years. The author's use of the analogy between fly fishing and spirituality as a source of power and grace challenged the students to think in terms of the complex relationship between the two as well as the implied relationship between the analogy and the father. As the blueprint indicates, five of the eight questions assessed the student's ability to recognize and/or evaluate the relationship between attitudes and values, and the motives of the character.

The table below provides information about the set of questions from this selection. For each question, statistics are given for three student groups of the question as determined by the student reponses.

Percentage of Students Correctly Answering Selected Multiple-Choice Questions

	Question Number							
	9	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**
All Students	70.7	39.5	55.2	61.6	46.6	88.5	88.6	82.4
Students achieving the *standard of excellence* (80% or higher, or A) on the whole examination	82.0	55.7	75.4	92.1	62.4	97.6	98.7	93.8
Students achieving the *acceptable standard* who received between 50% and 64%, or C, on the whole examination	66.6	33.6	47.3	50.3	40.9	87.6	86.9	79.6

9. Lines 10 to 21 suggest **most clearly** that father and sons approached Sunday afternoons with attitudes of

   A. apathy and resignation
   B. solemnity and resolution
   ***C.** dutifulness and anticipation
   D. dismay and apprehension

Question 9: In the opening question for this set, students successfully recognized that the father and son experienced a dutifulness and anticipation of the Sunday schedule of events. Of the students who achieved the standard of excellence on the whole examination, 82% successfully discriminated between B, the next most often chosen alternative, and the answer. A thoughtful reading reveals the narrator's willing study of the catechism and the father's anxious recharging of his soul for the evening sermon. Students who were unsuccessful on this question did not recognize the respective attitudes and perhaps selected their answer on the basis of what they thought their own response to a father's Sunday sermon would be.

10. The tone of the narrator's comment "This always seemed to satisfy him, as indeed such a beautiful answer should have, and besides he was anxious to be on the hills" (lines 16 to 17) can be described as

A. respectful
B. derogatory
*C. gently ironic
D. slightly pompous

Question 10: In this question students were required to identify the effect of the disclaimer "and besides" added to the description of the father's unexpected satisfaction with a rote answer. Selecting the best descriptor for this question did provide a challenge to students who would have had to focus on the statement itself and not the overall tone of the selection. That many students (27%) were distracted by the wording of D (slightly pompous), selecting it over the more appropriate description of tone as gently ironic, suggests these students would be unfamiliar with how a pompous tone is achieved.

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11. The narrator's point of view as a child is emphasized by repetition in the phrases

A. "the sermon that was coming" (lines 19–20) and "the most successful passages of his morning sermon" (lines 20–21)
*B. "had fallen from an original state of grace" (line 30) and "by falling from a tree" (line 31)
C. "man by nature was a mess" (lines 29–30) and "man by nature is a damn mess" (line 52)
D. "it trembled with the beating of his heart" (line 37) and "not so stiff it could not tremble" (line 41)

Question 11: This question directs students to identify phrases that emphasize point of view. Students answering the question correctly would likely have identified the answer as the only example of repetition that reflected a childlike perspective on an adult concept like that of original sin. The question did provide a significant challenge, perhaps because of the parallel structure of the two phrases in the alternatives or the requirement to account for the maturity of the judgement that "man by nature is a damn mess". Of the students who achieved the standard of excellence on the whole exam, 75.4% answered this question correctly, suggesting they were able to recognize the shift in perspective required by the question.

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12. The narrator's observation "Unlike many Presbyterians, he often used the word 'beautiful' " (lines 34 to 35) suggests that, in the narrator's view, Presbyterians are characteristically

*A. austere
B. optimistic
C. appreciative
D. hypocritical

Questions 12 and 13: At first glance it appears that in order to successfully answer question 12, students had to rely on their understanding of the meaning of austere and the contrast it makes with the concept of beauty. However, students also had to account for the narrator's established view of a Presbyterian character. Of the students who achieved the standard of excellence, 92% recognized from the referenced lines what the narrator implies about the nature of a distinctly Presbyterian world view throughout the selection.

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13. The seriousness with which the father regards mastery of the art of fly fishing is **most emphatically** conveyed by the statement

A. "He told us about Christ's disciples being fishermen" (line 4)
B. "If someone called it a pole, my father looked at him as a sergeant in the United States Marines would look at a recruit who had just called a rifle a gun" (lines 42–44)
*C. "If our father had had his say, nobody who did not know how to fish would be allowed to disgrace a fish by catching him" (lines 48–49)
D. " 'it is an art that is performed on a four-count rhythm between ten and two o'clock' " (lines 99–100)

Like question 12, question 13 required students to infer meaning and evaluate the relative emphasis each of four statements made in support of the importance of fishing in the father's life. The meaning of an alternative such as C often eludes readers who are unable to paraphrase: according to the narrator, the father thought it a disgrace for a fish to be caught by the ignorant or unskilled. The emphasis on and the severity of the word "disgrace" compared with how a Marine sergeant would look at a new recruit, involved an evaluation that was difficult for many students particularly for those with lower scores on the whole exam. Many of these students found B attractive. Comparing these two questions illustrates the interdependency of the reading skills assessed by these two types of questions.

14. The contrast between the attitude of the father toward fly fishing and the attitudes of his young sons toward fly fishing is **best** revealed in the statement

A. "we were left to assume, as my brother and I did, that all first-class fishermen on the Sea of Galilee were fly fishermen and that John, the favorite, was a dry-fly fisherman" (lines 4–6)
B. "After my brother and I became good fishermen, we realized that our father was not a great fly caster, but he was accurate and stylish and wore a glove on his casting hand" (lines 24–26)
*C. "My brother and I would have preferred to start learning how to fish by going out and catching a few, omitting entirely anything difficult or technical in the way of preparation that would take away from the fun" (lines 45–47)
D. "So my brother and I learned to cast Presbyterian-style, on a metronome" (line 104)

15. The father's dedication to the principle of " 'a four-count rhythm between ten and two o'clock' " (lines 99 to 100) suggests **mainly** his

A. Christian leadership
*B. methodical approach
C. knowledge of sportsmanship
D. inclination to be competitive

16. In this retrospective account of his father's combined roles of father, minister, and fly fisherman, the narrator conveys an attitude of

*A. affectionate regard
B. anxious self-doubt
C. criticism
D. cynicism

Questions 14, 15, and **16:** The last three questions on the selection did not prove to be difficult for students (88.5%, 88.6%, and 82.4%, respectively, answered correctly). A close reading of the text appears to have given the readers a clear picture of the father, so much so that upon being asked to contrast the attitudes of father and sons, they were not distracted by the alternatives.

It is interesting to note that although this excerpt deals with a father/son relationship and includes a detailed description of a lesser-known sport, the gender specific statistics did not indicate any significant difference in the rates of success overall between males and females. Admittedly, many factors could contribute to this being the case; however, the ability to read for meaning, tone, and attitude seemed here to render neutral any advantage or disadvantage inherent in the topic of the reading.

Comparison of Students' Results on Parts A and B

While it is not intended that Parts A and B of the English 30 Diploma Examination be considered as separate exams, it is interesting to compare the distribution of scores on the two parts of the examination.

	Part A	Part B
A	16.5	17.7
B	17.8	34.6
C	54.1	28.4
F	11.6	19.3

As the discussions on pages 5, 6, and 7 of this report have noted, student success on Part B: Readings is directly related to success on the examination as a whole (Parts A and B.)

As the above table shows, this close relationship is dramatically apparent at the standard of excellence. It is also apparent in the groups that failed Parts A and B.

For further information, contact Gail Gates (ggates@edc.gov.ab.ca), Mary Lou Campbell (mcampbell@edc.gov.ab.ca), or Elana Scraba (escraba@edc.gov.ab.ca) at the Student Evaluation Branch, 427-0010. To call toll-free from outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000.

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